

EdgeWork

ISSUE

No 3

The fanzine of OVER THE EDGE™



... submerged in a
solution and incubated for up to 12 days
in an atmosphere of helium, krypton, and
carbon dioxide. Gases within the experi-
ment cup are sampled by the chromato-
graph every few days, checking for traces
of molecular hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen.

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time singularity where physical laws are no longer valid. But our universe must satisfy

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Kaput meantime

Your editor goes to Gen Con again, previews the OTE-inspired card game and dreams fervently of greater things. Whether on the road or on the net, keep looking; I'll be out there.

Gen Con came again this year in the usual way, but with a few surprises as well. Like years past I set out on Wednesday morning with friends. This year I once again rode down with my buddy Bob and his business partner Joel. We took Bob's minivan because we would be picking up some product and some people in Northfield.

You see, Bob is one of the people who are the financial backers of Trident, Inc., the company that is putting out the collectible trading card game *On the Edge*. So he's tied in with Atlas and was hoping to carry the cards down to Milwaukee from customs in the Minneapolis airport. Such things were not to be.

Of bondsman

You see, Carta Mundi shipped the sample *OnTE* cards to Minneapolis by air and they

were held in customs. Bob drove down to customs and asked for his boxes, the customs people asked him for his release. When he said he didn't have one, he was sent over to the man to fill out the forms. With the words of Alice's Restaurant whispering in his head ("This piece of paper's got 47 words 38 sentences, 58 words we wanna know the details of the crime..."), Bob went to talk to the man.

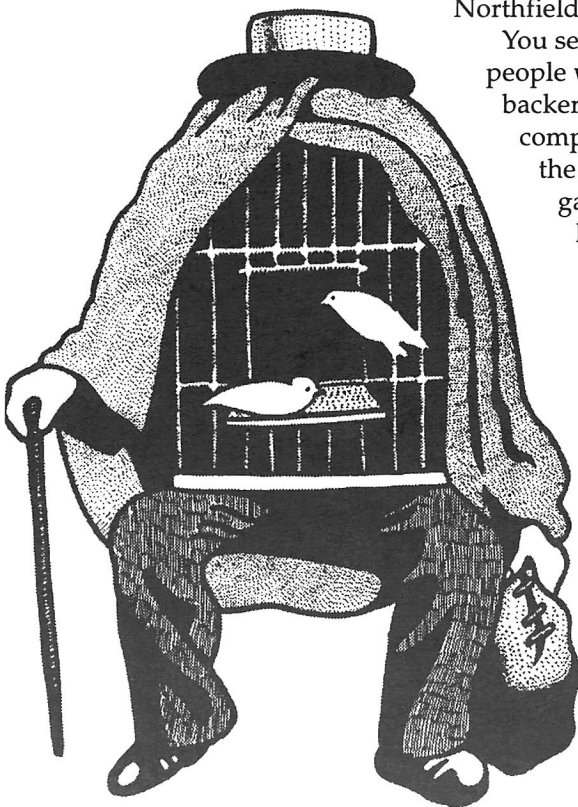
The man was quite pleasant for a person who, as part of his everyday existence, is lied to on a frequent basis. He took some information from Bob and then told him he'd have to get a bondsman. Bob fortunately met a customs bondsman on the way out of the airport and secured his services.

It seems the U.S. Treasury Department runs quite a scam with customs. You see, the U.S. Treasury does not run a collection agency. Therefore, they require that your duty payments be secured with a bond, *even if you pay in cash!* So Bob set things up with the bondsman, but not in time to leave Wednesday morning. So John Nephew would come up and pick up the cards and we would take the rest of the Atlas product on to Gen Con.

Happy ending

When John and Jerry Corrick (another partner in Trident, Inc.) came to customs the next day, however, customs wasn't quite ready to let the cards go. So they waited. Meanwhile, in Milwaukee, Bob and Joel set up the Atlas booth and we relaxed for a bit before dinner.

As dinner approached, we decided to check in and see how things were going. We got the



whole scoop and began to panic a bit. Bob was in favor of getting John and Jerry to the con, cards or no but Jerry thought that staying a little longer would be a good idea. It turns out Jerry was right as the cards were the last item released by customs on Wednesday night. With cards in hand, Jerry and John arrived at 2:30 A.M. Thursday morning, a scant 7½ hours before the con's dealer room would open.

Road trips

Due to the awkward nature of this year's preparations for the con, the trips to Milwaukee and back were significantly longer than usual. I did not return to my home until 1:30 A.M. Monday and had to be in to work at 7:30. With all the hassles, I began to think of a way to get to the con on my own with the freedom that entails. Being in Milwaukee, my thoughts turned naturally to Harley Davidson.

For a couple of years now, I've been looking through Harley catalogs with wistful eyes. I rationalize that a motorcycle would free up the car for my significant other while I'm at work days or when I'm off gaming. The increased fuel efficiency would save me money on my daily commute (at least for those 9 months of decent riding weather here in Minnesota). But for all the rational arguments I know that deep down, it's just the call of that steel and chrome that keeps this fantasy alive.

The idea of pulling up on a rumbling beast of a bike, bright chrome and black leather, appeals to me on a visceral level. When I daydream it, I can feel the rumble in my guts. The open road calls to me, beckoning me with secrets hidden behind the next hill. The freedom of being able to put two wheels to the blacktop and end up miles away whispers its promise. Perhaps next year; perhaps soon.

Rumbling the net

Atlas Games is one of those game companies that is pioneering the presence of gaming on the net. From its inception (and even before), Atlas has been available and visible on the net. The number of on-line gamers is growing with the increased media exposure of the "information superhighway." So whether you're a longtime net dweller or are just getting into it, you'll find Atlas Games and OTE lurking in the corners.

America On-Line

One main area of product support that Atlas Games takes advantage of is the commercial service America On-Line. I serve as Atlas' net rep on AOL part time. The dial-in to AOL is a long-distance call from Northfield so the guys down there weren't able to spend a lot of time on it. So I volunteered to handle the duties for them.

Overall, it's a good deal for me. I get a free AOL account in exchange for my Atlas duties. This allows me to cruise the rest of the gaming information available on AOL and keep in touch with the industry. I keep an eye on the Atlas support groups and answer questions as they come up, sometimes whipping e-mail down to John Nephew if something tricky comes up.

One of my favorite duties is hosting the monthly on-line conference for Atlas Games. This is a time discussion of all the stuff Atlas is doing. Unfortunately, we're not very well known so most of the hour or so that is allotted to me, I spend chatting with one of the cadre of amiable AOL moderators or fielding the quick questions that the few folks who swing by have. If you're on AOL and want a direct line to Atlas, check out the conference schedule in the On-line Gaming Forum and stop by one of the conferences.

Edge mailing list

One of the longest-running support areas for OTE has been the OTE mailing list. Run by Clay Luther, it has been a great source of inspiration for me and others playing OTE. The list serves as the perfect forum to ask questions, share ideas and otherwise collect weirdness to use in your OTE game. Traffic is fairly light and has a high signal to noise ratio. Nearly everything that comes over the list is worth reading.

The big names of OTE also actively participate on the list. Robin Laws pops in quite frequently, though we haven't heard as much from Jonathan Tweet since he's moved off to WotC land. John Nephew has been fielding questions about OnTE as it develops and has always been an open source of information for the dedicated OTE fans that subscribe to the list. Heck, list-subscribers also get in on nifty deals like the limited-edition OnTE t-shirts that John had printed up right before Gen Con. If you're connected to the net and enjoy OTE you can't afford to *not* be subscribed to the list.

The following is excerpted from the FAQ file for the mailing lists served from Clay's gojira.monsta.com domain. (Clay also has Masterbook and Warhammer FRP mailing lists and a mailing list for a Masterbook-based fantasy world, Capra.)

How do I subscribe to the OTE mailing list?

You can subscribe to OTE mailing list by sending mail to the list request address. The address is over-the-edge-request@gojira.monsta.com

You may subscribe to the distribution or digest form of the mailing list. The distribution form "distributes" incoming mail

to the mailing list immediately. The digest form collects a day's worth of messages into a single "digested" format and sends you only one (or a few, if the collected digest is large) message a day.

To subscribe to the distribution list, set your subject to SUBSCRIBE.

To subscribe to the digest list, set your subject to DIGEST.

Example: Your e-mail message headers would look something like this:

To: over-the-edge-request@gojira.monsta.com

Subject: SUBSCRIBE

How do I access the OTE list archives?

You can access the list archives via e-mail or anonymous FTP.

To access the OTE list's archives via e-mail, send a message to the list request address. Set your subject line to HELP. You will receive instructions.

Example: If you want to access the Over the Edge archives via e-mail, your message headers would look something like this:

To: over-the-edge-request@gojira.monsta.com

Subject: HELP

If you have FTP access (or FTPmail access), you may FTP to [gojira.monsta.com:/pub/lists](ftp://gojira.monsta.com/pub/lists)

If you have any problems getting access to the OTE list or archives, drop Clay a line at edge-owner@gojira.monsta.com and I'm sure he'll get you squared away quickly.

WWW page

Atlas Games has World Wide Web pages available for on-line users. WWW is a link-based setup that is similar to GOPHER, but more flexible for the common user and creator. WWW readers (the programs that allow you access to the WWW) include Lynx and Mosaic, both commonly available on UNIX and VMS computer systems (ask your System Admin). The Atlas Games web pages contain up-to-date info on Atlas products, including the new On the Edge collectable trading card game. The URL is: <http://io.com/user/presage/agindex.html>

Vintage Marsala

Mike DeArruda originally submitted this adventure to Atlas Games. When they decided not to pursue publication of it, I began to work with Mike to get it in the form you see now.

Introduction

This is a mystery-based adventure for Over the Edge. The scenario begins with the PCs learning of a reward being offered by Patron Lydia Goodman for the capture of a murderer. The victim, Margaret Weston was a Sommerite who was found garroted in the D'Aubainne Library.

Through a series of encounters the players will determine who the murderer is, and attempt to apprehend him in order to collect the reward. As the adventure unfolds, the players learn the story within the story, and uncover the murderer's plot to abduct a patron.

Within the adventure a new Al Amarja patron is detailed, and three new Al Amarja landmarks are described: The D'Aubainne Library, Graves' Vineyards, and Amarja Communications, Inc. (ACI).

Background

Wilson Graves is a multimillionaire on the run from U.S. authorities for committing securities fraud. Graves embezzled over \$250 million from the Global Oil pension fund and slipped out of the U.S. before he could be apprehended by the FBI.

Ten years later, the "Graves Affair" still is a source of embarrassment for the United States government and especially for Global Oil.

One of Graves' bodyguards, Vasily Merchenko has cut a deal wherein he will deliver Graves over to Global Oil. Merchenko met Margaret Weston at a party at Rugosi's Italian Restaurant. Once he found out that Weston worked for Amarjan Communications, Inc. (ACI), he convinced her to help him gather information on Graves' financial dealings. In return for her help, Merchenko promised Weston that he would help her leave Al Amarja. Merchenko and Weston began meeting weekly to deliver recordings of Graves' telephone conversations, as well as copies of any faxes or telegraphs sent or received by Graves. After two weeks, the pair became romantically involved, and Margaret discovered Merchenko's penchant for rough, sadistic sex.

The abuse began to take a toll on Margaret and she sought spiritual solace through the music of Karla Sommers. Though she tried to lose herself in her new-found religion, her hatred for and fear of Merchenko continued to grow daily. When Weston found out the real motive behind Merchenko's plot, she began planning her own little deception. Weston figured that Graves would pay for information on Merchenko's betrayal, so she also began to monitor Merchenko's communications. Eventually she had enough evidence to take to Wilson Graves. She called Graves and told him that she had information about someone who would betray him to Global Oil and the way in which they would

do it. Graves agreed to meet with Margaret and, if her information proved true, to pay her \$100,000 and fly her off the island.

Graves, suspecting a setup, informed his staff of the meeting. Because he had been told that someone close to him would betray him, however, he needed an excuse to have protection without using his own people. He told his staff that situations had developed that demanded a personal meeting with a powerful business associate in a public place. They were not to have any security forces at this meeting. Since all his staff would be recognized, he ordered them to hire some very discreet protection that would pose as customers of the open-air cafe where the meeting was to take place. The personal security would be nearby in case of emergency. He arranged the meeting on the Plaza of Flowers at 10:00 A.M. on the following Tuesday. Merchenko, curious at this development so close to the conclusion of his scheme had a peek at his boss's appointment calendar. There he found the entry "Tuesday, 10:00, Weston" and drew his conclusions.

Margaret made her regular meeting with Merchenko that Monday at 10:00 P.M. They met this time in the D'Aubainne Library. Unknown to Merchenko, his former lover, Nivohnne Tussuad, worked at the library. He did not see her when he entered, nor she him, and while she was re-shelving returned materials, Merchenko coolly murdered Margaret with a garrote in one of the library's aisles. Merchenko then left the library.

Outline of Events

▼ Flyers with notice of hefty reward for finding murderer of dead Sommerite begin showing up.

- Margaret Weston was supposed to meet Graves to tell him of Merchenko's plans.
- Merchenko learned of the meet and murdered Margaret in the library with a garrote.

▼ Search for the murder begins

- PCs are involved through a number of options. (mercenary, neighbor, "favor" for Peace Force, "favor" for another, contacted by Graves if they have a rep, etc.)
- Many others with motives from Sommerite to mercenary join the fray.
- Merchenko wants it quiet.
- Graves wants to find out what happened to someone who was supposed to meet with him.
- Peace Force wants the whole thing to go away and hinders all investigations/attempts at cover-up. (Preventing Merchenko from destroying evidence.)

▼ PCs get clues

- Pump the Sommerites for info, they're glad to help (this will lead to a morass of bounty-hunters).
- Can try to pump Margaret's coworkers
- Graves may contact them, giving them vital info.
- PCs with Peace contacts can get some info from the Peace Force.
- Could scam information from other bounty-hunters.

▼ PCs learn of Merchenko's involvement

- Sommerites can describe her boyfriend. "Not a tuner, though, y'know..."
- Murder of librarian may bring clues.
- PCs may have seen him if they met with Graves.
- May try to track down information on him (lead to seedy S/M clubs, etc.).

▼ PCs bring info on Merchenko to Graves/Peace/Goodman

- Depends on who PCs want to impress/hustle.
- Will need to convince Graves of his bodyguard's betrayal with hard evidence.
- Peace Force will look on PCs with favor if a conviction can be garnered.
- Goodman will reward likewise.
- Other interested parties will try to hamper/harm the PCs as they get close unless they are careful to hide it.

▼ Afterward

- May have a patron/buddy in Graves.
- May have appreciation of Sommerites.
- May have enmity of Merchenko and his supporters.
- May have way into upper crust of AA society. (schmooze with the D'Aubainnes, get invites to hoity-toity Airport parties, etc.)
- May become catspaws for elite Martians.

Things Begin

Last evening, a Sommerite was found murdered in the D'Aubainne Library. Already this morning (a Tuesday), Sommerites are blanketing Al Amarja passing out leaflets that announce that Patron Lydia Goodman is offering a \$100,000 reward for the apprehension of the murderer. The leaflet lists the victim's name as Margaret Weston.

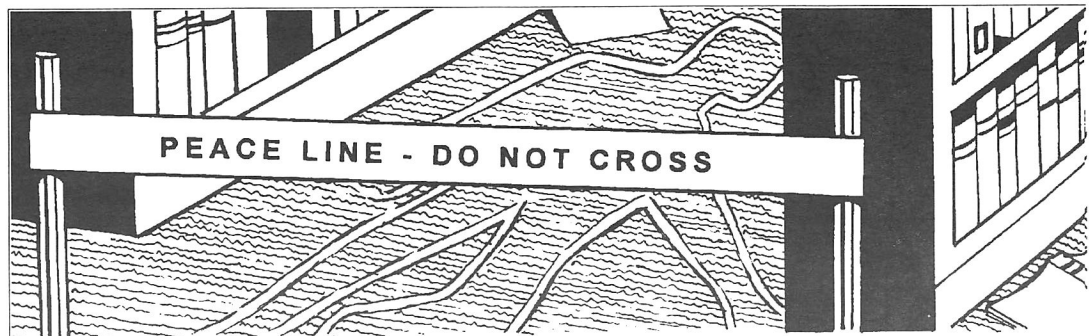
Depending upon the habits of your players and how you want to tie them to this adventure, you can involve them at this point. They may be the hired muscle waiting with Graves for Weston who will never show. They may be patrons of the same sidewalk cafe and see Graves' reaction when a Sommerite hands him the flyer. They may get the leaflet independently and pursue the reward on their own. They may be approached by Graves following his failed meeting to look into the matter. The method and manner are left to your discretion.

The Murder Scene

The D'Aubainne Library is located in the Justice Barrio. The building front features white marble columns with lion sculptures off to each side of the entrance. The Library has 4 stories, it's windows are barred and alarmed fire doors allow egress from the bottom of two stairwells in the rear of the building. Inside the building, the Library looks as you'd expect — lots of books,

bookshelves and tables. On the first level is the lobby and two large stacks rooms. The stacks rooms are to the east and west of the lobby, separated from the main chamber by double wooden doors with leaded glass inserts. The stacks rooms are open and airy, having only short stacks along the outside walls. They are open to the second floor and a balcony runs around the second floor overlooking them. Entrance to the second level is gained by the steps that proceed northward from the lobby or the elevator positioned near the foot of the stairs.

The door to the east stacks is sealed and marked with bright yellow tape bearing the legend "Peace Line—Do Not Cross." Until late Tuesday afternoon, the Library is swarmed with reporters and bounty hunters all bothering the librarians to no end. Nivohnne will have been sent home by the Library management in hopes of deterring some of these people. With little effort, the PCs can get a view of the murder scene. If they ascend the stairs to the second floor they can get a partial view of the site if they stay outside of Peace lines marked on the balcony. With a little digging, however, they can purchase photographs of the site from people who either snapped the pictures before the Peace line was marked or risked arrest to get the photograph. In any case, such photos or views are unlikely to give the PCs any information unless they have fringe powers. If they are diligent,



polite and help clear the library, a thankful librarian may tell them that the Peace Force took the security camera tapes for analysis.

Nivohnne Tussuad once dated Merchenko, but she ended the relationship with him due to his brutal treatment of her during sex. She did not see Merchenko enter the library or leave. She did not witness the murder. Nivohnne will, however, be able to identify Merchenko from the security camera tapes that are currently being analyzed by Peace specialists. The tapes will show him entering the library at about 9:50 P.M. and leaving a short time later without any books. He is one of perhaps a half-dozen people that could be suspects.



The Madhouse

The murder has made the front page of Al Amarja Today. The article gives little personal information about Weston. The paper only prints information that it has been told by an attributable source (to avoid being accused of invading other's privacy). The article in the main section of AAT describes the murder in grisly detail, complete with explicit photograph. The two-page sheet that most Martians read (see props) has a briefer, but no less complete description of the crime. Information contained in the article is attributed to Nivohnne Tussuad, the librarian who found the body. It includes the name and description of the deceased, the fact that she worked for ACI and that Nivohnne had spoken with the Peace Force who instructed her to not reveal further information.

Al Amarjan Television will also cover the story. Their coverage tends to involve more lurid details and speculation on the life and habits of Margaret and her murderer. Talk shows will feature "experts" revealing everything from the murderer's early childhood to the victim's sexual orientation, backing it all up with pseudo-psychological "facts." Useful information that can be garnered from television includes Margaret's address, the fact that Otto's Men don't appreciate bounty hunters poking around the neighborhood (or, apparently, television reporters based on the footage), that several other people (including some violent ones) are also searching for the murderer and that the Peace Force doesn't appreciate all of this "help."

Nivohnne will be hounded by bounty hunters and provided with some protection from the Sommerites. Getting to her may be difficult for the PCs. She feels fairly secure in her flat in the

Justice Barrio and the Sommerite bodyguards don't linger there. With Otto's Men patrolling the streets, it will be difficult for some PCs to reach her at her apartment. Adjudicate their attempts, and if they succeed in reaching Nivohnne's apartment they will discover the second of Merchenko's murders (see below).

Amidst all this hubbub, Martin Devlin, a regular library patron has largely been ignored by the Peace, the press and the bounty hunters. Martin, however, probably knows Margaret better than anyone other than Merchenko. He's madly in love with her, has been since he saw her walking in the neighborhood, but never felt up to approaching her. He knows where Margaret Weston's apartment is. He knows she worked at ACI and that the man she was dating was abusive to her. He has seen her with Merchenko on a couple of occasions and can provide a fairly good description of the man. He has told the Peace everything he knows but thinks that they're swamped with other leads, mainly false ones, and doesn't hold out much hope that Margaret's killer will be found.

Amarjan Communications, Inc. (ACI) is Not Amused™ at all the attempts by bounty hunters and the press to get information about their deceased employee. Some involved in the search for Margaret Weston's killer have found their phone service strangely erratic, adding the heat of complaints to the difficulties. Any straightforward attempt to get information from ACI will be politely but firmly rebuffed. The PCs will have to come up with a sneaky method to get past the receptionists and security officers if they want to get any information from ACI. If they succeed, they will meet Mercedes

Roxas in the company cafeteria or at a water fountain near her cubical.

Roxas will admit to knowing Weston and to working for her. If the PC can convince the empathic Roxas that they are looking for Margaret's murderer for a "good" reason (e.g., justice, protect Graves, bring the normal level of peace back to the island, etc.), she will admit to helping Margaret gather information on Graves and later, on Merchenko as well. She justifies her actions by stating that Margaret is her boss and that as an employee she does what she is told by her supervisor. Roxas is able to identify Weston's boyfriend as a Russian named Vasily Merchenko, and that he is a bodyguard for vineyard owner Wilson Graves.

Roxas will mention that she has a copy of a cassette tape that she delivered to Margaret the day before her death. She will turn the tape over to the PCs if asked. The tape contains a few inconsequential conversations of Graves', and two conversations of Merchenko's. The first Merchenko conversation took place last week and was between Merchenko and Weston. Merchenko told Weston to meet him at a club in Points (the Chrome Dome) and that she had better have some interesting information for him today. She seemed frightened to meet him but agreed to do so. The second conversation occurred a few hours later and was between the Russian and a man referred to as "Blue." During the conversation Merchenko told Blue that "delivery is set for next week at the Vats." (GMs Note: The timing of the "delivery" is for 2 days following Margaret's murder or whatever you feel is necessary for the timing of this story.)

At Peace Force Headquarters, all hell has broken loose. Inspector Jeorda Papandreou has been

assigned to the Weston case. He's not happy that Lydia Goodman has offered a reward for the apprehension of the murderer. As a Peace Force officer he can't accept the reward and the last thing he needs is bounty hunters getting in the way of his investigation. Add to this the fact that every nut and his brother is confessing to murder or implicating someone else and the press are hounding his officers, interfering with his investigation and generally making his life hell and you will quickly realize that Inspector Papandreou is not a happy man.

The Following Day

The media attention to this murder, inflamed by Lydia Goodman's reward, has the unfortunate consequence of causing another murder. When Vasily Merchenko learns that Nivohnne Tussuad may be a witness to the murder of Margaret Weston, he goes into action. Since Graves will be understandably freaked out by Weston's arranging a meeting only to turn up dead, Merchenko can't get too far away from Graves on the day following the murder. The next day, however, he will have enough free time to track her down and kill her as well. Perhaps even taking enough time to get full enjoyment out of the process. A GM should time things so that PCs gain entrance to Nivohnne's apartment just a few minutes after Merchenko has left. Long enough for Merchenko to leave without them seeing him but quick enough so that the blood hasn't dried.

In Nivohnne's apartment, the PCs can find her diary in a desk drawer. Entries from a year ago will mention her involvement with Merchenko. From the diary, the PCs can learn his description, that he works for Graves, that he

has sadistic tendencies and that Nivohnne broke off her relationship with him. If they read further they will learn that she still feared him. The entry for the day of the murder describes her testimony to Peace and her shock at the crime. There is no mention of Merchenko in that entry.

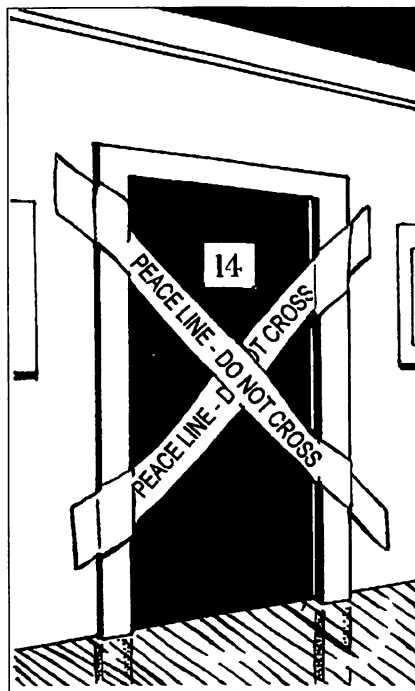
By now, Graves is getting more and more freaked out. He can't learn anything about this dead woman who was supposed to meet with him about one of his close people betraying him except from those same people, who may be lying to him. If the PCs are fumbling along and missing lots of clues you can have Graves contact them in an effort to get more information about what Margaret Weston knew. He will offer to add his own \$100,000 to the reward posted by Lydia Goodman but will only make this offer in private, not wanting to draw attention to himself.

Weston's Apartment

Margaret Weston rents a second floor one-bedroom apartment in the Justice Barrio. Otto's Men are out in force, patrolling the streets to keep their neighborhood safe from the kind of wackos that go after huge rewards. If the PCs succeed in bypassing them, they can get to the apartment. If they do this by force, the GM should make their time in the apartment short as reinforcements will arrive to toss them out. Otto's Men may even call the Peace Force if the PCs caused them sufficient difficulty.

The door to the apartment is crossed with yellow plastic tape imprinted with "Peace Line—Do Not Cross." Inside the apartment the PCs will find that the place has been searched rather thoroughly by the Peace Force. Furnishings include a couch, coffee table, television, cassette player, small refrigerator, stove, and a small

table with two chairs. Weston's ACI ID Card sits on the coffee table along with a copy of *Al Amarja Today* from the day before her murder and a couple of generic Sommerite pamphlets. There is also a notepad mixed in with the detritus on the coffee table. If the PCs perform Standard Mystery Procedure #2 (i.e., take a rubbing of the blank page to see what was written on the previous page) they can discern a note saying, "Graves, Flowers, 10am." In the refrigerator are two bottles of Amarja Marsala wine. Stuck to the bottom of one of the bottles is a card that's signed "Love Vasily." The writing is facing the bottom of the bottle. In the bedroom there's a bed, dresser, and a night stand with a lamp. On the night stand is a travel brochure for Rio de Janeiro, and some junk mail from Amarjan Family Publishers that proclaims "You Are Already A Winner!" While the shelves are lined with Karla Sommers tapes, close inspection of the tape deck will reveal that it contains a generic tape. Playing the tape will garner the PCs the information



attributed to the tape in the possession of Mercedes Roxas above. (GMs note: There is only one copy of this tape. Either Roxas got it to Margaret before she was murdered or she didn't. The option of presenting it here is designed to give the PCs another avenue by which to solve this mystery.)

Climax

With any luck, the PCs have now put together enough information to implicate Vasily Merchenko in Margaret Weston's murder. Furthermore, they should have some inklings into Merchenko's plans for Graves. From here, their options multiply and there is no way to plan for the exact route they will take to the conclusion of this scenario. What follows is a description of what will happen if the PCs are struck with an amazing case of lethargy and decide to forego the \$100,000 reward and future possibilities by sitting on their information and telling no one. One hopes the GM will persuade them otherwise.

After hearing of Weston's murder, Graves beefed up security at his mansion. If Merchenko was to make the rendezvous with "Blue" he would have to remove as many of these extra security people as possible. Fortunately for Merchenko, Weston's attempt at betrayal has afforded him the opportunity that he needed. Merchenko will fabricate evidence implicating one of Graves' other bodyguards or personal servants for the betrayal that Weston spoke of. When one of them leaves the compound on a routine errand, he will reveal this "proof" to Graves. Graves will send most of his men out in search of the supposed betrayer, keeping Merchenko and a some hired thugs at the compound as protection. Merchenko will have little

difficulty subduing Graves' remaining bodyguards and will take the bound and gagged Graves to the Vineyards' fermentation vats to await the arrival of "Blue."

If the PCs arrive at the vineyard in the midst of this process, they will find the front gate unattended and should have little difficulty gaining entrance. When they go looking for the mansion's inhabitants they will find the place deserted. After a few minutes of searching the deserted but open house, they will find the evidence of Merchenko's betrayal, the bodies of the remaining guards and servants, most of them garotted like Margaret Weston. If they dally long enough in the house, they will hear the unmistakable sound of a helicopter approaching.

At the fermentation vats, Merchenko has collected Graves and as many thugs as necessary to make for an interesting fight with the PCs if you think it should come to that. If the PCs arrive before the helicopter, Merchenko will attempt to bargain with them, offering them passage off the island and handsome rewards for simply going along with him now. Merchenko has no intention of keeping these promises, he's simply stalling until the Global Oil helicopter can get Graves off the island.

Some possible ending scenarios, your mileage may vary:

- The PCs call in the Peace Force when they discover the mansion deserted. This will result in the Peace most likely capturing Merchenko and taking most of the credit (not to mention cutting the PCs out of Lydia Goodman's reward). Graves may be more thankful to the PCs and reward them himself.



- The PCs take an interminable time negotiating with Merchenko. If they fall for Merchenko's stall, the helicopter will land and the thugs will attempt to hold off the PCs while Graves is loaded onto the helicopter and Merchenko leaves.
- The PCs take the fight to Merchenko to try and wrest Graves from him and/or capture him for the reward. This sort of direct action may win the day for the PCs if they are determined but the cost will be high. Merchenko is a professional and his people will not be lightweights.
- The PCs learn enough, quick enough and set a trap for Merchenko. This option has the highest probability of success. Particularly if the PCs can keep Merchenko from learning about their plans. But remember, he is a professional. In particular, hinting of the plan to Lydia Goodman in anticipation of the reward may get back to Merchenko through the grapevine.

- The PCs come up with something unexpected. With the possibility of fringe traits and bizarre abilities, who knows what schemes the PCs will hatch. Go with the flow and have a good time. Remember, this is for your entertainment, too.

Storyline continuation ideas:

If the players rescued Graves:

- 1) Graves will offer them jobs as bodyguards.
- 2) "Blue" searches out the PCs to extract revenge for their interference in the delivery.
- 3) Al Amarja Today will do a cover story on the PCs. The publicity surrounding the PCs and the reward money that they've collected will attract the interest of some unsavory characters.

If the players allowed

Merchenko to leave with Graves:

- 1) Her Exaltedness isn't happy that a patron has been snatched from Al Amarja. (Not to mention the loss of income!) She instructs the Peace Force to investigate and apprehend anyone who aided in Graves' abduction.
- 2) Graves wins his freedom through extraordinary means and arrives back at Al Amarja. His first order of business once he arrives is to pay back those who sold him out.

No matter what the outcome of the adventure:

- 1) If the PCs remain on Al Amarja, Inspector Papandreou targets them for special treatment.
- 2) Martin Devlin transfers his infatuation to a PC and sneaks around after her/him, unknowingly interfering in the PCs' activities.

Locations

The D'Aubainne Library

Books in the D'Aubainne Library are arranged using the Dewey Decimal System, with the Card Catalog being accessed through computer terminals. The Library has an extensive collection that would rank it as one of the top libraries in the world if the island of Al Amarja was more widely known.

The Library has an restricted access area that is located under the building. This area can only be accessed by the permission of Monique D'Aubainne. The air in this area is computer controlled to remain at 5 degrees Celsius with zero humidity in order to preserve the rare and irreplaceable books that are stored within.

Some of the books that are in the restricted access area are:

Tome of Merlin; Alchemy, Copper to Gold in 3 Easy Steps; The Future, Past and Present; Over the Edge, a role-playing game of surreal danger

Amarjan Communications, Inc. (ACI)

Amarjan Communications, Inc. (ACI) controls all the electronic communications on Al Amarja. Telephone, telegraph and computer communication lines all run through ACI's mainframes. The location of the actual switching offices are a closely guarded state secret. But the offices of the company can be easily found in the burbs on the way to the airport.

The ACI building is surrounded by beautiful landscaping. Security cameras are mounted at various places on the building itself, and in the landscaping. Security checkpoints are located directly outside of the building's entrances. Employees are allowed entry once they've passed a thumb print check.

ACI offers some special service plans but does not advertise them widely. In addition to the following list, other plans may be set up after talking with an ACI special account representative. Note that most of the wealthy and/or powerful people of Al Amarja pay to be free of these plans, providing another avenue of income for the government and freedom from annoyances for the customer.

Friends and Enemies Plan: Similar to "Call Blocking," it provides access to your number from only those numbers you designate (and certain other ones mandated by the government like the Peace Force and Customs and Immigration). It has the added feature of automatically having your enemies' phone numbers being rung up in the wee hours of the morning.

900 Number Service: You thought 900 number services in the U.S. were raunchy? Try ACI's 900 Number Service! Current favorites include: 900-BITE-HM/HR, 900-GRANMA, 900-COW-LUV and 900-WET-NUN.

Party Line Plan: Not at all like the similarly titled service in the U.S. This plan will let you randomly listen in on other people's phone conversations. Great fun at parties!

Sorry, Wrong Number Plan: This plan causes people who dial you up to be connected to a geographically diverse selection of numbers. You can choose from a



Cantonese laundry, a "hot line" in the Kremlin, the farm of a Kentucky hillbilly, the office of (from all anyone calling can tell) El Presidente Republicos de los Bananos or other odd and easily misunderstood numbers. In addition, the calling party is charged the additional fees for the long-distance call!

Graves' Vineyards

Grave's Vineyard is located on the east coast of Al Amarja, just off of the 7th of October Highway. The vineyard is surrounded by a 4 meter high electrified chain link fence with a guard house at the Vineyard's main gate. If unscheduled visitors arrive, one of the guards calls up to the mansion for instructions. If, in the course of this scenario, the PCs mention Weston, Graves will agree to speak with them. (If they know of a connection between Weston and Graves, they obviously aren't your average schmoes.) One of Graves' bodyguards will come down from the mansion to escort the PCs to Graves.

Graves lives in a large mansion that has tennis courts and a swimming pool. Lots of scantily clad beautiful women can be seen in and around the mansion. Visitors meet with Graves in his office on the mansion's main floor. Jazz music is piped into all of the mansion's rooms.

In back of the mansion, rising up the hills, are the vineyards themselves. Graves Vineyards is noted for its fine Marsala, Amarja Marsala. Marsala is a sweet, dark, fortified wine. Wine is fortified by adding extra alcohol, usually in the form of a grape brandy. The winery is fully contained on the grounds but is separated from the mansion by clever landscaping. The processing and fermentation buildings are a 5-minute walk from the back side of the mansion.

Major GMCs

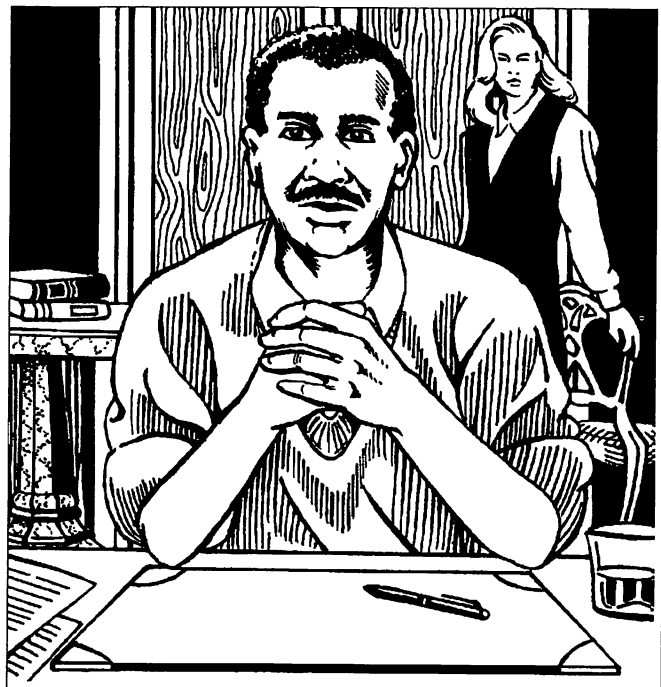
Wilson Graves

Patron

African American Male, Age 38, 178 cm, 77 kg, athletic build

Graves grew up in a ghetto on the south side of Chicago. Graves' father was one of the city's first black firemen. When Graves was 6 his father was killed while trying to rescue an infant from a burning house. In order to make ends meet after the death of her husband, Graves' mother worked two jobs as a cleaning woman. Without parental supervision, Graves fell in with bad company and became a member of a street gang.

After a string of arrests as a juvenile, Graves was taken under wing by a prominent black minister named Roland Jemison. Jemison taught Graves that there was a life outside of the ghetto and showed him that education was the key to his escape. Taking equal parts Malcolm X and Dr. King, Jemison gave the young Graves a vision of the future where he could make something



for himself. Under Jemison's tutelage, Graves became an honor student, eventually earning a degree in Finance.

Graves took a job as an accountant at Global Oil in Chicago, and quickly moved up the ladder, becoming Director of Finance in only four years. As he rose up the corporate ladder, Graves learned of the mysterious island of Al Amarja. As Director, part of Graves duties included overseeing the laundering of money through Al Amarja. Seeing an opportunity to make himself financially comfortable for life, Graves began to transfer Global Oil pension funds into an Al Amarja account under his own name. After eight years of these enormous embezzlings and just before Global Oil discovered what had occurred, Graves fled to Al Amarja and made a deal with Monique D'Aubainne. Her Exaltedness was impressed with Graves' ingenuity and allowed him to remain in Al Amarja. Of course Graves' payment of \$30 million for an old Al Amarjan Vineyard made D'Aubainne's decision an easy one.

Wilson Graves has green eyes and wears an earring in his left ear. Graves enjoys jazz music and playing tennis. Graves is usually surrounded by beautiful women and is always impeccably dressed.

Languages: US English

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Street fighter, 3 dice: Grave's childhood prepared him well for the rough life of Al Amarja. (Drops into "ghetto accent" when physically threatened.)

Financial expert, 4 dice: Graves knows how to make money with money, his own and other peoples. (Reads the Wall Street Journal.)

Tennis Player, 3 dice: Rising up the corporate ladder, Graves learned to enjoy the traditional "old boy" sport. (Wears tennis whites when relaxing.)

Egotistical: From pulling himself out of the ghetto and swindling a multi-billion dollar business, Graves has developed an overpowering sense that all he does is correct. (States his opinions as if they are facts.)



Vasily Merchenko

Bodyguard/Ex-KGB Field Operator

Russian male, Age 30, 188 cm, 95 kg, well-muscled, brown hair, brown eyes, brown suit.

Vasily Merchenko took up residence in Al Amarja after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Upon arriving on Al Amarja, Merchenko obtained a job as one of Wilson Graves' bodyguards.

After learning of how Graves acquired his fortune, Merchenko contacted Global Oil and made a deal to deliver Graves over to them in exchange for the release of three KGB operatives who had been incarcerated in the United

States. The three had been caught delivering U.S. state secrets to the Soviets. One of the three imprisoned operatives is Merchenko's brother.

Languages: Russian, US English

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28

Traits

Self Defense, 4 dice:

Merchenko's KGB training makes him a reliable fighter in many situations. He is comfortable with a variety of weapons, with improvised weapons or unarmed. (Fighter's carriage.)

Assassin, 4 dice: In addition, Merchenko has been trained as an assassin and knows a variety of ways to kill quickly and silently. Includes knowledge of poisons and some exotic weaponry. (Carries a garotte.)

Self Disciplined, 3 dice:

Merchenko's quick mind and cool demeanor have saved him as many times as his physical abilities. He stays calm in tense situations. (Icy stare.)

Abuses Women: Merchenko has a kink for rough sex and physically abuses his partners. This can lead him into trouble. (Salivates heavily at attractive women.)

Minor GMCs

Margaret Weston

ACI Supervisor/Sommerite

British female, Age 32, 170 cm, 60 kg

Margaret Weston is an English woman who is a Supervisor for at Amarjan Communications, Inc. (ACI). Weston rents a one bedroom apartment in the Justice Barrio.

Weston was a telephone operator in London and moved to Al Amarja three years ago. Through her past experience as an telephone operator she quickly landed a job as a supervisor with

ACI. Weston had ambitions of climbing the corporate ladder, but was repeatedly passed over for promotion as it was felt that she was not the proper material for ACI's "Inner Circle." Weston eventually realized that she had reached a dead end career-wise, and began to look for a way to leave Al Amarja.

Margaret Weston met Merchenko at a party at Rugosi's Italian Restaurant. Weston found Merchenko to be charming and handsome. After the couple had dated a couple of times, he told Weston that there was a way that he could help her leave Al Amarja.

Once he found out that Weston worked for ACI, he convinced her to help him gather information on Graves financial dealings. In return for her help, Merchenko promised Weston that he would help her leave Al Amarja. Weston wanted to leave Al Amarja so bad that she put up with Merchenko's beatings, hoping that her escape from the Russian and the island would soon come.

Weston met Merchenko weekly to deliver recordings of Graves' telephone conversations, as well as copies of any faxes or telegraphs sent or received by Graves. At night, Merchenko would once again abuse Weston.

The beatings began to take a toll on Weston and she sought spiritual solace through the music of Karla Sommers. Though she tried to lose herself in her new-found religion, her hatred for Merchenko continued to grow daily. When Weston found out the real motive behind Merchenko's plot, she began planning her own little deception. Weston figured that Graves would pay for information on Merchenko's betrayal, so she also began to monitor Merchenko's communications. Eventually Weston had enough evidence to take to Wilson Graves.



Nivohnne Tussuad

Librarian

French female, age 28, 160 cm, 50 kg, petite

Nivohnne Tussuad is a French woman who moved to Al Amarja four years ago from Bordeaux, France.

Tussuad is an orphan who grew up determined to live life in the fast lane. She saved as much money as she could for eight years and then moved to Al Amarja expecting to become one of Al Amarja's High Rollers and Jet Setters. Once her money ran out, Nivohnne found that the "beautiful people" of Al Amarja wanted nothing to do with her.

Languages: French, Italian, US English

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14

Traits

Organized, 4 dice: Nivohnne keeps an excruciatingly neat apartment and knows where all of her belongings are at all times. (Wears starched business suit.)

Al Amarja Today

Sommerite Murdered!

Religion's patron offers large reward!



Late yesterday, Peace officers responded to an emergency call at D'Aubainne Library. Librarian Nivohne Tussuad had discovered a body brutally murdered among the stacks. Peace officers quickly cordoned off the scene and set to the process of identifying the body. Peace officials have declined further comment on this case, pending their investigation. When approached by AAT reporters, Tussuad said that she'd given full details to the Peace Force who instructed her to speak to no one else.

This paper has learned from well-placed government sources that the victim has been identified as one Margaret Weston. Weston, according to Customs and Immigration records, was an immigrant from the United Kingdom, and an employee at Amarja Communications Incor-

porated. ACI personnel files list her as 170 cm, 55 kg with dark hair and eyes. Friends of Weston indicated that she had become a follower of the Sommerite religion some time last year.

Lydia Goodman, patron of Sommerites on Al Amarja is said to be offering a reward in the amount of \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of the person or persons responsible for this crime. "Let the peace of this world and its music bring justice as well."

Individuals with information regarding this crime are urged to contact Lt. Papandreou of the Peace Force. The Peace Force asks that no independent civilians attempt to apprehend the dangerous perpetrator of this crime.

Med. Oil Shutdown!

LONDON—Mediterranean refineries are undergoing particularly large-scale maintenance shutdowns in the period from end-January to April, largely in response to a tight crude oil market that has

squeezed profit margins, refiners and traders in the region say.

Al Amarjan entrepreneurs prepare for an influx of workers, hoping to take advantage of the time off that the workers will have.

Voice from the Grave!

Tapes Reveal Hidden Garbo Personality

MIDDLETOWN, Conn: Greta Garbo speaks from the grave in tapes given to a Connecticut museum. The tapes contain more than 100 hours of telephone conversations the late reclusive actress had with her friend Sam Green between 1971 and 1981. Green is donating them to the Wesleyan Cinema Archives at Wesleyan University. In one exchange Garbo, who dropped out of public life in 1941 and lived an intensely private life on New York's east side, said, "You know, it's so strange how life is. You go along and you accept whatever is there as fact. "You put on your face and your makeup and everything and you get going," she said. "All of a sudden, one day, there's a hand that comes—in my imagination, every seven or 10 years or whatever—a hand that goes over the face and changes it a bit, puts more weakness in it... And it's... revolting each time," said Garbo, who died in 1990 at age 84. In another exchange with Green, Garbo talks about a gossip column. Garbo: "I got a horrible article sent to me this morning." Green: "What kind of article?" Garbo: "Well my latest boyfriend is Van Johnson... you know who that is, don't you?" Green: "I think it's the old actor who wears red socks." Garbo: "Old—don't say that. And don't call him an actor. Absolutely ghastly. (The press makes) you into such an idiot, you can't believe it. I wonder what prompts people to sit down and write those sort of things."

Little Scratches

I just received some hop rhizomes from Freshops: Freshops 36180 Kings Valley Hwy. Philomath, OR 97370 (503) 929-2736. Good luck.

A woman followed me home today. When I confronted her she just blubbered and held up a playing card. The card had my picture and name on it. If any others have had this experience, please contact me at 936004. Ben Feather-on-Wind

The "technical possibilities" for rendering soap from the cadavers of murdered Jews were not yet understood during World War II. Do you suppose it's been worked out since? If it has been, who accomplished this technological breakthrough? Where? In what laboratory? At whose order? How was the human fat collected? Who were the guys and gals who chose to donate their corpses to this worthy project? Humanitarians all, surely. We hope it wasn't some careless Palestinians. What a naughty thought. Will we ever know? We are not told what evidence Bauer has to show that Germans didn't know how to make soap from Jews during WW II. Were they working on it? They were working on an atomic bomb. Of course the Americans were working on an atomic bomb.

— Jabber Control Message —

.. JABBER v1.2 .

Bite me Total Taxi! End the oppression of true entrepreneurs, boycott Total Taxi!—Kazoo

The winds blow cold tonight. I don't fear with you by my side. Come out of the cold and into my warmth. We'll sit by the fire all night.—Come hear the good tunes.

.....
Register now! The life you save may be your own.

Her Exaltedness reminds the Al Amarjan public that the use of unlicensed psychic or paranormal powers is illegal on Al Amarja. The Center for Paranormal Control is here to help you integrate successfully with Al Amarjan society. Come register now and you are eligible for a free counseling session and psychic power testing. Painless! And it's the law.

.....
Be protected! Aliens are among us and you may have already been abducted and not know it. How can you be helped? Schwa has the answer.

Never fear! THEY haven't quite gotten their grubby little pinky talons into everything yet. There's plenty of crumbling edges to the global datamushroom called the Internet. (cute ryme, eh?) In the pages beyond you'll find a compendium of some of the fringiest of the fringe on the Net, stuff guaranteed to curl yr teeth and grow nipples on your forehead.—URL: <http://www.zeitgeist.net/public/Boing-boing/hmh.guide.html>

Paranet information service is here to provide you with up to the minute info on alien infiltration, weird sightings, odd happenings and other stuff with a kinda extraterrestrial event.

Slack, Slack, and more Slack! Bob lives! (but who cares?) Fuck the conspiracy—the pinks aren't gonna stand in your way as you devolve towards Homo Excelsior.

Terrified of Merchenko: She knows that if Merchenko finds her, he will kill her. This limits her social contacts and makes her edgy around strangers. (Keeps looking over the shoulders of people she's talking to.)

Peripheral GMCs

Mercedes Roxas

Telephone Operator

Filipino female, Age 28, 165 cm, 66 kg

Mercedes Roxas is a Filipino woman who was born on Al Amarja. Roxas' parents fled Quezon City, Luzon, the former capital of the Philippines in 1948 after the sudden death of Mercedes' uncle, President Manuel Roxas. Roxas works for ACI as a telephone operator, and reports to Margaret Weston.

Roxas has the ability to reads auras. She is able to sense if someone means to harm her.

Languages: Spanish, US English, French

Traits

Reads Auras, 2 dice: By watching someone closely for a short time, Roxas can begin to see the aura around them. By interpreting the colors found there she can sense the person's general state of mind. (Stares uncomfortably at people.)

Jeorda Papandreou

Peace Force Inspector

Greek male, Age 45, 173 cm, 173 kg, stocky build

Papandreou was a member of the Greek Olympic Weight-lifting team years ago, until he murdered a man he suspected of having an affair with his wife, and then murdered his wife in an Athens open air market. Papandreou pleaded innocent due to insanity and was acquitted. Due to his notoriety, he was hounded relentlessly by the press and left Greece for Al Amarja.

Papandreou is a brutal man that enjoys inflicting pain on others. He uses his position as a Peace Force Inspector to bully people whenever he can.

Papandreou should be used to occasionally harass the PCs. If the players get off track, he can also be used to give them subtle hints.

Languages: Greek, US English

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Strength, 4 dice: Papandreou's Olympic physique is still in good shape. (Large upper-body muscles.)

Peace Force Inspector, 3 dice: Includes the right to carry a firearm while on duty and contacts within the Peace Force. Also gives him an excuse to bully others without fear of reprisal. (Peace uniform.)

Cruel: Papandreou enjoys inflicting pain and suffering on others. In his Peace job, this has mostly been redirected towards criminal and seditious elements of society but occasional lapses earn him trouble. (Carries billy club.)

Martin Devlin

Library Customer

Martin Devlin is a short, bookish-looking man wearing thick glasses. He has an obsessive personality and easily fixates on tasks or objects. The object of his last obsession was Margaret Weston. He followed her to work every day, hiding in the back of a jitney and even donning feeble disguises to let him get closer to the object of his obsession. Martin can be a good source of information for the PCs if they happen upon him in the library. He may be moping near the door marked by the Peace Line, standing on his tiptoes to peer

through the frosted glass of door, hoping for a last glimpse of Margaret.

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 10 dice (thin)

Traits

Good Memory, 4 dice: Martin remembers quite a bit. His memories tend to focus around the objects of his obsessions so they may not make sense to others. ("So I went to that shop that smells like Margaret's soap and picked up a loaf of bread. The tiles on the floor were cracked but they were just the color of Margaret's eyes...")

Obsessive: Now that he's lost Margaret, Martin will soon fixate on something else. This may be a PC, a particular cuisine, a place, an animal or something more odd. If it is a PC, Martin will hang around and probably disrupt the life of someone who is used to some anonymity. (Lingering gaze.)

Otto's Men

If the PCs go to Weston's apartment, they may be confronted by Otto's Men (OTE pg. 144) on the way there or as they leave the building. Otto's Men will hassle any "different" looking PCs and will seek to detain the PCs if they have reason to suspect the PCs have done anything illegal (like enter Weston's apartment).

Peace Force Officers

Jeorda Papandreou's men.

Jeorda typically travels with two other Peace Force officers. Though they are not as brutal as Papandreou, they are still none the less thugs who enjoy cracking a few skulls now and then.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21



Playing On the Edge!

Atlas Games jumps into the collectible trading card game market with On the Edge. What does On the Edge mean to you, the Over the Edge player? Your editor takes a hard look at this new game and comes up with some answers.

On the Edge (OnTE) is Atlas Games' foray into the collectible trading card game market. By now, I'm sure you are all familiar with Magic: the Gathering put out by Wizards of the Coast. To some, OnTE will look like an base attempt to cash in on the craze created by Magic. In some respects the cynics are right, but in others they are shortsighted. OnTE looks to make some quick cash for Atlas but it is a fun game in its own right and also offers some interesting resources to those who simply play the role-playing game that shares its background.

Description

On the Edge is, at first glance, a lot like Magic: the Gathering. It is packaged like Magic and its displays look a lot like those used by Magic. There are reasons for this. The folks out at Wizards of the Coast didn't just blossom on to the game scene as the phenomenon they are now. They struggled for years as a small game company, working hard to develop a reputation of quality and integrity as a company. When

you've worked your way up like they have, you remember the people who helped you along the way. Atlas Games was supportive when they first jumped into the waters and Wizards took a chance to repay some of that support.

The folks at Wizards are allowing Atlas to use the dies they developed for cutting the display boxes and packaging of Magic for Atlas's effort at a card game. The money this saves by not requiring new dies to be cut is only part of the support this signifies. The generous offer also allows Atlas to use the same design criteria for the boxes, saving hours of layout work.

As if that wasn't enough, however, Wizards also helped Atlas secure a deal with their Belgian printer, Carta Mundi. This helped assure Atlas would have the highest quality for their cards and also that they would be able to profit by Wizards' experience with the printer. In addition, the contracts with the artists and other contributors to the game are based on templates provided by Wizards of the Coast.

Playing the game

With all this assistance, it is not surprising that there is a physical resemblance between OnTE and Magic. Apart from the mere physical resemblance, there is some resemblance in play as well. While you play OnTE, you struggle to get resources into play to call characters, gear and other cards into play. But that's really about as far as the similarity goes.

One of the key differences between Magic and OnTE that I particularly like is the place of combat in the game. In Magic, you must attack your opponent, depriving him of life to win.

(Though I suppose, technically, you could simply protect your own life and win by having more cards than your opponent.) When you play OnTE, you are struggling to amass influence to bring your global conspiracy to power. You might attack some of your opponents operatives to help achieve this goal or prevent your opponent from doing so, but you never directly attack your opponent. Also, by building your conspiracy's organization with an eye towards defense, it is possible that you'll be able to win the game without launching a single attack.

To me, this moves OnTE out of the role of a simple war-game and closer to a bridge between war-gaming and role-playing. The role-playing I like to engage in has a good mixture of character interaction and adventurous danger. To have only one method of solving a problem would seriously hamper my enjoyment of the game. Likewise, once you get over the excitement of discovering new cards, Magic begins to lose its allure. When you get down to it, all the cards simply give you different or better ways to attack your opponent or prevent him from attacking you.

In OTE, the relationships between the cards goes beyond what they can do for you in the game. The principal of exclusion provides a good example of what I

mean. There are certain cards that exclude others. Having one in play means that you can not have a card of the other type in play. For example, cards representing the Aries gang may exclude those representing the Glorious Lords. The Aries gang won't work for you if they know you're working with the Glorious Lords.

The strategy begins

Beyond this philosophical difference between the games, however, there are differences in the play of the games as well. Longtime Magic players will tell you that the great amount of the strategy in Magic comes from the construction of your deck. With a certain amount of experience you end up deciding on a ratio of mana, creatures and spells in your deck that you are comfortable with and thin your deck out to achieve this ratio. Playing OnTE will have some of that strategy but it adds some subtleties and differences as well.

For example, one strategy in Magic is to collect many identical cards that are useful and load them up in your deck. Eventually, this practice got so abused that WotC had to issues rules for tournaments that limited the number of identical cards you can have in your deck. In OnTE, however, this problem has been avoided. On main type of card is the character card. Characters, with a very few exceptions, are named and unique. There can not be more than one of them in play at a time. After all, there is only one Monique D'Aubainne. So collecting hordes of those cards won't guarantee you victory. Indeed, even having one doesn't guarantee that your opponent won't get it in play first, preventing you from playing it until you can remove the card from play.

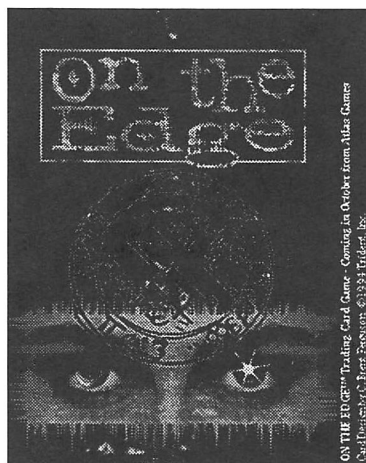
The uniqueness rule also had the benefit of promoting diversity in the types of cards collected and played and in limiting the effect that collecting has on play. Those that collect hordes of cards should not be at a great playing advantage over those who buy just a few.

Working the cards

After you've played Magic for a while, it become apparent that the strategy drops significantly from the deck-building stage to the playing stage. After about 10 turns into a game, players can, if they've constructed their decks well, cast any spell they've included in their decks. Furthermore, the play of the game has only the simplest of strategies. Whether to attack or not, cast a spell or not is fairly straightforward.

In OnTE, however, the strategy doesn't stop with putting together a deck to play with. The manner in which you play your cards is significant.

When creating the conspiracy organization that is the core of OnTE, you develop your "rank and file." Literally, the character cards are laid out in ranks and files; up to three ranks deep and in as many files as you need. The "front rank" cards represent the front lines of your conspiracy, this is the group that will take the most action during your operations, striking rival conspiracies to thwart their designs. The middle rank cards are the operatives that provide the stability of your organization. They protect their higher-ups and provide unique abilities to help your plans develop. In the rear rank, the secluded upper echelons of your organization wield their influence to build your organization, lead their underlings and bring about your plans of world domination.



When launching an attack against a rival conspiracy, you pick the operative that will perform the strike and the subject of the attack. The attacking ability of your underling is compared to the defensive power of the opponent and, barring unforeseen complications, the more able person wins, removing the opponent from their controller's organization. In game terms, the cards' Attack Power and Defense Power are compared and the character with the lower number is "popped," removed from play. In the case of a tie, both characters are popped.

Thus as you play the turns of the game, you must organize your underlings in the most efficient manner. Losing characters that are destined for your upper echelons early can hamper your long-term success. Simply having a group of thugs, however, can not gain you the kind of influence you need to gather more forces or collect the power you'll need for victory.

"Great," you say, "the game looks interesting, but what good does this card game do for the role-player interested in OTE?" Well, apart from being a neat game in the same genre as OTE, OnTE offers some benefits to the OTE player.

A new look at the Edge

The first benefit is the great artwork on the cards. The new paintings commissioned for OnTE offer us a new look into the Edge. Ever wonder what the Plaza of Flowers looks like? How about Swaps in the Plaza of Gold? Common locations in OTE games have been illustrated in color and can give you new insights on the "sound and smell" of the Edge.

How many times have you been at a loss to describe the culturally diverse people on the

On the Edge's Artists

More than 25 artists are hard at work, illustrating the cards of OnTE. They range from familiar names to promising newcomers for whom OnTE will be their first professional publication. Here are brief introductions to some of the game's artists.

Kevin Davies

An accomplished illustrator, designer, Kevin has painted covers for Dragon Magazine and is a key artist and creative guy for two of this year's new role-playing games: *Nexus* and *Murphy's World*.

C. Brent Ferguson

Brent brings a distinct, postmodern graphic sensibility to the packaging of OnTE: He created the card back design and the frames for the card faces in addition to a number of the illustrations.

Eric Hotz

Eric has been working with Atlas since the beginning: He illustrated the inside of our first release, *Tales of the Dark Ages*, in 1990. Eric may be best known for his superb work with *Ars Magica*.

Greg Houston

Greg illustrated *Cabin Fever*, our most recent *Cyberpunk* release. His style is vivid, energetic and highly distinctive.

Cheryl Mandus

Cheryl has been the main illustrator of OTE supplements since the game was first released in 1992. Besides her interior black & white work, she illustrated the covers of five OTE supplements.

Jeff Menges

Jeff's name will be familiar to many, as it appears on quite a few *Magic* cards. Jeff's work has been found in many other places, such as covers of *White Wolf Magazine* and *Ars Magica* supplements.

Doug Shuler

Doug Shuler and I have worked on various projects together since 1989, when Doug painted the cover of the 2nd edition of *Ars Magica*. These days, however, he is best known as a prolific *Magic* artist, having illustrated such favorites as the Serra Angel.

John Snyder

John's work may be familiar from numerous *Call of Cthulhu* supplements published by Chaosium. Examples on my own game shelf include the covers of *Escape from Innsmouth* and *Cthulhu Now*.

-John Nephew

island? I recognize that my white, middle-class, Mid-Western background doesn't exactly make me the best source for cultural diversity. But Al Amarja is set on the crossroads of an enormous variety of human cultures. Not to mention the alien ones. So the illustrations of characters gives me, and I imagine others, better ideas of how inhabitants of the Edge might look, preventing me from populating the place with Nordic clones. (Though I imagine one could put together a tour group...)

John Nephew has done a stellar job getting artwork from established industry pros and newcomers as well to flesh out the vision of Al Amarja as expressed in OnTE.

Exposure

The trading card game has increased the overall gaming market by about 25% according to reports I've read. This new market has resulted in people who have never entered a game store before, wandering in looking for cards. One of the goals of OnTE is to expose more people to the background of OTE. The idea is that people will buy the main rulebook to learn more about the background they first encounter in OnTE.

I don't know about you, but I have a difficult time finding people willing to take a look at OTE, much less play it. As retailers point the card-buying customer who has to have more towards the rpg section of the shop, more people will find the OTE rules who would never have looked at it before. We can hope that this influx will make it easier for find people to play with.

Another side-benefit along these lines comes from a distribution angle. Retailers don't want to be left behind on the

current wave of revenue generated by collectible trading card games so many of them are ordering OnTE as their first Atlas Games product. If the game sells successfully for them, they are bound to look at other Atlas products. The end result could be better availability of Atlas releases in a game store near you.

Idea conversion

Another area where I see OnTE impacting OTE players is in the use of the cards themselves in play. We've already covered their use as visual props. There will be the desire to translate the Attack Power and Defense Power of a card to Attack and Defense dice in the rpg, but it is a bit more difficult than that. The Attack and Defense Power of OnTE characters is based not only on physical combat ability but also on things like accessibility, access to security devices and personnel and so forth. Direct conversion is likely to be unsatisfying.

But as a source for new ideas for things like fringe powers or devices, OnTE is a gold mine. Furthermore, I can see the cards being useful for coming up with impromptu GMCs. In particular, the effort that was taken to individually name all of the character cards provides a good resource for the kind of odd names that should populate the Edge. No more Bob and Joe Glorious Lords, now I can pull out a couple of cards and get Nachtmeister and Lope.

Increasing support

While cynics might look at the release of OnTE and say, "They're selling out!" nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, Atlas is trying to make money off of this venture and if current sales are any indication, they are succeeding admirably. But rather

than simply pocketing the money and disappearing into the night (though I believe the thought crossed their minds), Atlas intends to put the money back into their products; especially into OTE.

One thing I hope to see out of the increased cash flow for Atlas is an increase in cash towards efforts like *EdgeWork*. Maybe I'll even get this rag out quarterly like I'd like to. But even if that doesn't happen, I'm confident that we'll see more and better Atlas supplements for OTE.

In addition, John Nephew has made rumblings on the internet about releasing a second edition of OTE. OTE2 wouldn't change the basic mechanics or the background of the game. Ever since the publication of the original rules, however, John and Jonathan Tweet have wanted to fix minor things and update the design to match the newer, better efforts coming out of Atlas. The money coming into Atlas from OnTE will help make this extra support possible.

Conclusion

OnTE looks like it will be one of the more successful trading card games to follow in the footsteps of Magic. Those of us that have already bought into OTE will benefit from this in many ways. If nothing else, a new batch of people who know what you mean when you talk about glugs, Movers and Kergillians will now inhabit your local game store. But beyond that, the cards will be useful to rpg players as a variety of resources and perhaps all this money going into Atlas will mean more and better products coming out of it. Most important of all, OnTE is a fun game on its own and gives you another way to dive into the Edge!



Involuntary measure

Another chapter in the ever-growing story that is The Edge. This time around we've Robin Laws from back when OTE was just something called Al Amarja that Jonathan Tweet was talking about in A&E and something from Scott McDaniel....

The Form Destroyer

An Internet Construct

Scott McDaniel

At the beginning of the last academic year, a freshman at D'Aubainne University named Glen D'Arby discovered the Internet world of Usenet News, IRC, and MUDs. He rapidly became an Internet Junkie, attending the occasional class during the day (enough to make the grades and keep his net access) and surfing the Internet all night. Glen is a small, thin, meek teenager who escapes into netland. There, he doesn't feel so small. To the rest of Internet culture, Glen is a tough, sharp-witted, dark and somewhat mysterious presence. His on-line persona is how Glen wishes he was in real life. In keeping with net practice, however, they do not know him as "Glen," but rather by his process name: The Form Destroyer.

Because he has interacted with thousands of people worldwide as The Form Destroyer and because

he is particularly compelling while in the persona, Glen has unknowingly caused a unique entity to come into being. The combined belief of thousands of people in this person has caused a physical manifestation of The Form Destroyer to appear on Al Amarja. The Form Destroyer is not a real person; he is a construct based on a widely believed persona on the Internet. Glen D'Arby is totally unaware of this manifestation, but The Form Destroyer is aware of his own status. True to the nature of the 24-hour culture of the net, The Form Destroyer needs no sleep or rest. Because his existence is a result of the combined belief of many people, he recovers from physical harm with remarkable speed. Even his physical death would not be permanent, so long as enough people believe that he is real.

There is one catch. In the world of Internet, when people lose net access, they effectively cease to exist for the rest of the net. Thus, if Glen D'Arby loses net access, which will occur upon his graduation, The Form Destroyer would shortly cease to exist. Glen lifted the name "The Form Destroyer" directly from a Philip K. Dick novel called *Maze of Death* because it had the slightly sinister air about it that Glen was trying to project. The construct itself usually tells others to call him "Form."

Form is not comfortable with the idea of just "fading out" in three years or so when Glen graduates. In his eyes, Form has three years to become a real, physical being. This is his primary, overriding goal. He also wishes to keep his existence a secret from Glen out of fear that the boy

would stop posting as The Form Destroyer and take a new persona. This would also be fatal.

Form's personality is a direct extension of the net. He is knowledgeable on the surface about many topics, but does not possess deep knowledge about anything except computers (as Glen does) and martial arts (which Glen has managed to convince the net that he practices). Form tends to take jokes as if they were meant perfectly seriously, and he laughs at things that others do not. He only "gets" jokes if the verbal equivalent of a "smiley" is included (i.e., "That was a joke" right after the initial telling). He is particularly bad at judging facial expression and tone of voice, as those modes of communication are absent over Internet. He is very quick to "flame" anyone or anything with which he disagrees, and he uses computer related terms in his everyday speech (such as "flame"). For instance, after saying something that he didn't really mean to a person, instead of apologizing he might say, "Wait a second, cancel that pos— er, sentence." He will then consider the matter completely resolved. Finally, if he encounters anyone by the name of Dave Rhodes, he will severely abuse him.

As a side note, Form never had to go through Customs. He is not on record with the Government or anybody else and would like to keep his paper trail low.

White male, 1.9 meters, perfect build, wears a grey trench coat and dark clothing all the time. Tends to gravitate to shadows, and exudes an air of the mysterious. Dark brown hair, grey eyes. Late 20s.

Languages: English (that's all that Glen posts in)

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Internet Construct (4 dice): Form needs no rest. After combat, he recovers half damage plus 2d6 hit points. Remaining hit points return as if each day was spent at full rest. While he does not actively post on the Internet, he knows of a number of people around the world who would probably help him out if he were to identify himself as The Form Destroyer (he considers this an emergency option only). (Uses Internet lingo in everyday conversation)

Computer Networks (3 dice): Because Glen has displayed his formidable computer network knowledge often, most people assume The Form Destroyer is a capable network surfer/hacker. Form stands a reasonably good chance at breaking into most computer networks and systems if he can find access to a terminal with a modem connection. (Types at Mach 4)

Martial Arts (3 dice): Glen claims to study two forms of martial art: Tae Kwon Do and Capoeira (a martial art developed by Brazilian slaves and disguised from their masters as dance). It includes fighting unarmed, with 3/4 staves (sugar canes) and knives (used to cut the canes). Form knows both types of martial art. (Fights have a choreographed look to them)

Internet Construct: Form suffers at least one penalty die in most social situations because of his lack of intuition during verbal communication. Somewhat more seriously, he will cease to exist if anything happens to cut Glen D'Arby off from the net. (Doesn't laugh at jokes, does laugh at "normal" conversation.)

Story Ideas:

1. Form comes to the PC's for help. Yesterday, a sloppy and disgusting man appeared out of thin air, asked Form why he wasn't turning into goo, and then attacked. Though Form doesn't know it yet, the Sandmen perceive him as if he is a tulpa. They have become quite curious about this tulpa who does not dissolve when confronted, and now they are chasing him all over the Edge. If the PCs decide to help Form, the Sandmen start chasing them too.

2. Glen D'Arby gets laid up in the hospital with mono, and is pleasantly startled when an anonymous "friend" gives him a laptop, a modem, and a phone credit card. He offers to hack into The First National Bank and transfer a reasonable sum of money to the PCs accounts if they find out who gave him the computer and why.

3. No one except the PCs seem to notice that some guy in Flowers has been giving an exotic martial-arts/dance demonstration for more than four hours now without taking a break. They may be curious themselves, or the Philosopher's Stone may hire them to bring this guy in for testing.

4. Form begins shadowing the PC's, having noticed that they seem perhaps just a little bit "more real" than the garden variety Martian. He wants to find out why, hoping that whatever the reason is, it may just help him in his effort to become an independent being.

Kitchen Party

Trendy hangout

Robin Laws

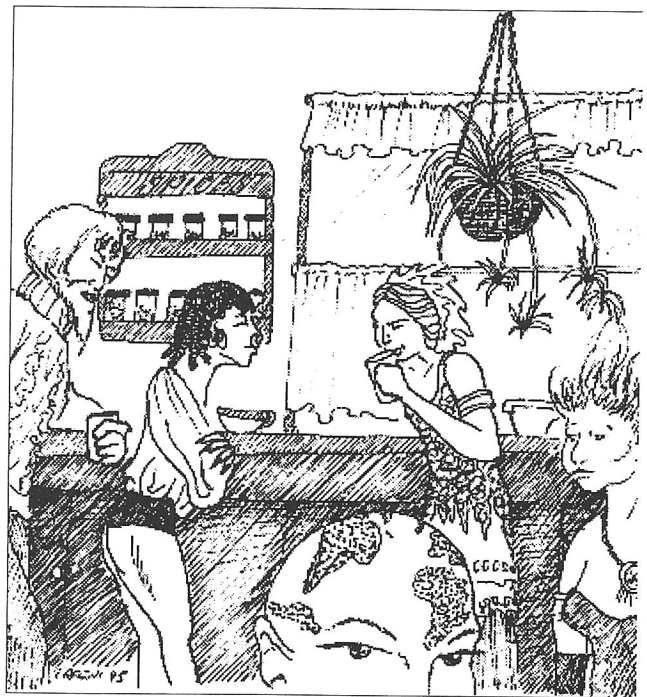
Location: Flowers Barrio.
Crowd: yuppie tourists. Music: DJ—rock hits of the 1960s. Food: finger food & snacks. Pricey.

Kitchen Party is a four-story tenement building converted to a trendy pick-up spot. The apartment walls have all been retained, although all the doors have been removed. Each room has been remodelled to look like a kitchen, and the music is kept low to permit conversation. Caters to a crowd nostalgic for their college days. On the surface, a fun, upbeat place; underneath, reeks with sexual desperation and loneliness. Slogan: "Wherever you go, you're at a kitchen party."

GMCs:

Arduino Puente: Manager. Man in late 20s with spiky hair. Born in Al Amarja but schooled in Canada, giving him the background in North American culture required to make Kitchen Party's crowd feel at home. Friendly, helpful, speaks 12 languages (all badly). A willing source of information about rumors and underground goings-on in The Edge. Unfortunately, his information is almost always incorrect.

Giovanni Lilli: One of a number of careful predators who haunt pick-up joints like this. (If useful to GM's purposes, change to Giovanna Lilli.) Looks for lonely & unstable individuals of either sex who he can latch on to and exploit or defraud for the length of their stay on the island. Very experienced at this sort of thing, smooth, manipulative. Carries a switchblade. Habitually combines coke & relapse. Not a pusher but will put contacts onto drug connections if he doesn't think they're narcs.



Sunshine Street

Gang club

Robin Laws

Location: Four Points Barrio.
Crowd: poppies, mostly adolescent. Music: see below.
Food: junk food only. Prices: cheap.

This run-down converted storefront is home to a youth sub-cult loathed by Al Amarjan parents. Poppies wear polyester—pastel colors preferred, headbands, platform shoes, have long hair, immaculately groomed. Guys must be free of facial hair but usually have rings in both ears. Girls wear false eyelashes, very dark eyeshadow lavishly applied, no earrings. The decadent, perverse parents of The Edge hate them because they're rebelling by being *boring*!

Preferred music: Al Stewart, Chris deBurgh, Cat Stevens, Harry Chapin, Bread, Gerry Rafferty, Fleetwood Mac. They don't use any drugs other than pot and even go easy on alcohol. They carry knives but don't usually start

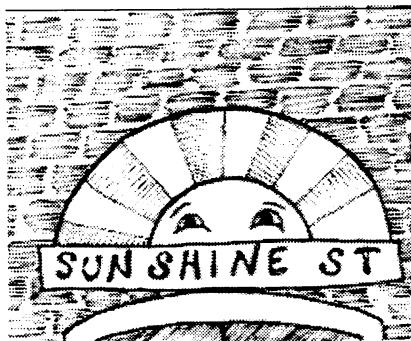
trouble; The Edge has some skinhead and headbanger gangs that used to view poppies as easy targets until they learned to defend themselves. There are more and more poppies in The Edge lately.

GMCS:

Marek Ferencyk: Good-looking, charismatic, the leader of the Poppies. Anxiously awaiting the arrival of some London or New York fashion photographer to publicize them and make them a worldwide movement. Looking forward to selling out. Thinks of himself as a potential rock star, but hasn't taken any concrete steps towards learning to sing or anything.

Davitt O'Meara: Marek's ex-lover and the actual founder of the poppies. Tall and built like a brick shithouse. Says he invented the whole thing as a joke. Has shaved his head and taken to dressing in Neo-Edwardian style to distance himself from the whole thing. Periodically shows up drunk and causes trouble. Already some impressionable youngsters are watching him with the intention of forming a new subgroup around his personal style.

Lin Xue: Cute young thing and low-level Mover initiate. She's been assigned the mission of keeping an eye on the poppie movement in case the higher-ups come up with a way of exploiting them to their ends.



Zybnek "Triple Bypass" Jandak

King of the Hospital Betting Hall

Robin Laws

Zybnek Jandak has always considered himself a hustler. Even during the dark years in his native Czechoslovakia, he was always doing better than his neighbors, the fools who played by the rules. A card game here, a bribe there—all you had to do to live in style was to be a little smarter than the next guy. The point wasn't even the extra cigarettes or sausage—it was putting one over on the idiots who never took the time to figure the angles. No true hustler, however, would be content to remain in a Communist country, when all the real big stakes were on the Western side of the fence. A few bribes took care of that, and soon he was in the beautiful U. S. of A.

He landed in New York, where he lost a bundle he didn't have learning to play poker. Just before the loan sharks broke his arms and legs, he turned a corner and pulled in the big haul. Having mastered poker, he headed down to Florida to lose at high stakes golf the money he won at cards. Soon he was beating the rich golfers for their clams, too. Once he won half a million on eighteen holes played with a peculiar handicap—his opponent got to use his regular clubs while Jandak played with a fencepost and a swordcane. After an abortive sally into the world of big money backgammon, Jandak headed off to Vegas to master pool.

It was a poker tournament in The Edge that made Jandak transfer his patriotic loyalty once more. He won the tournament as usual, but experienced something even deeper than a religious conversion when he saw the

Betting Hall at the D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center. Regular gambling would never again be enough. The truly life and death stakes of emergency trauma betting said everything there was to say about life. Jandak has been parked here ever since.

Jandak is an expansive man with an enormous appetite for junk food, Dutch beer, and foul Turkish cigarettes. He hates silence, and carries on a running color commentary on operations in progress if no one else is talking. He especially loves to swap war stories of great scams with other hustlers. He's very friendly to anyone who approaches him, which doesn't stop him from fleecing them of every cent they care to bet.

His nickname comes from the fact that he bet, and won big, on his own heart surgery a couple of years back. "Only time I ever bet for sentimental reasons," is his standard line about the incident. Some suspect that his unrepentant consumption of heart-clogging substances is attempt to get back under the knife for another big score.

Czech man, age 53, 187 cm, 140 kg, blue dress shirt, black leather vest, brown polyester slacks, big mane of frizzy brown hair, handlebar moustache.

Languages: Czech, English

Traits

Hustler, 4 dice: Master at assessing the odds and out-psychoing the rubes. Includes mastery of high-stakes poker, golf and pool, as well as the medical knowledge required to win consistently in the Hospital Betting Hall. (Favorite saying: "I never gamble—I always know the result before my money goes down.")

Businessman, 3 dice: Jandak invests his winnings in local businesses, all of which are

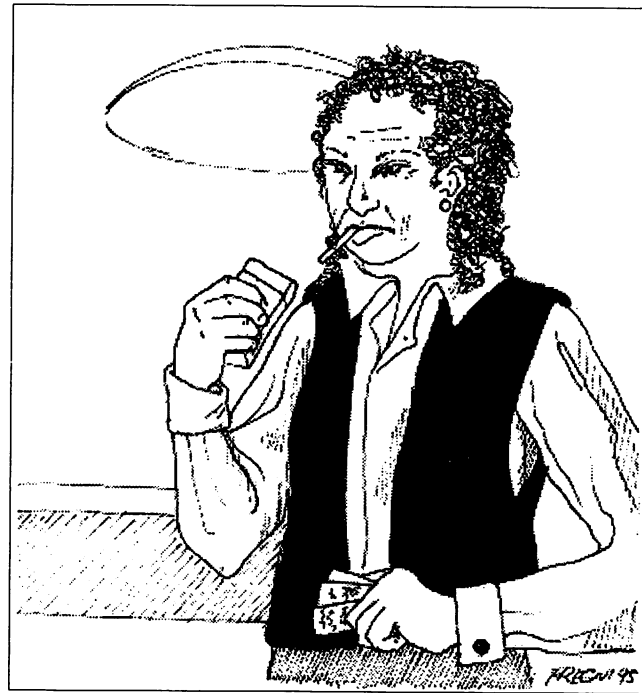
generating healthy if unspectacular profits. He owns two tattoo parlors, a chain of dry cleaning outlets, and a soap factory. (Reads Businessweek between operations.)

Heart Attack Waiting to Happen: Suffers penalty die on all physical actions. (Constantly inhaling, slurping down or chewing something disastrous.)

Story Ideas

1. If a PC is undergoing an operation at the hospital, his comrades have two ways to find out what his chances of survival are. One way is to ask the doctors. The more reliable way is to head up to the betting hall and find out where Jandak's money is.

2. The PCs are jawing with Jandak, listening to a master raconteur, when a stabbing victim is brought into the emergency room. Jandak bets heavy on "die", and, sure enough, the victim dies under the knife. Then he bets he can solve the murder without leaving the room, just like Nero Wolfe, if the PCs are willing to go out and get one piece of information each for him. He sends one to get an invitation to Sir Arthur Compton's next party, another to buy a copy of Cat Fancier from Tramh LeThuy's newsstand, a third to ask a humanities professor at D'Aubainne University whether she thinks Troy was also Atlantis, and so on. Upon return (no doubt after the group has gotten into various spots of trouble throughout the city) Jandak announces the identity of the killer, and turns out to be correct. He smiles and collects the money. Then, if asked, he admits that the clues were all red herrings—he recognized the victim and knew him well enough to figure it was a dead certainty that his wife did him in.



Beatriz "Nose" Pecanis

Shabby Lawyer

Robin Laws

Beatriz Pecanis squeezes a modest living out of Al Amarja's unyielding legal system. If she were an honest lawyer, she have trouble doing even that. She's called "Nose" not only because her snout is the size and shape of a battered kiwi fruit, but also in tribute to her uncanny ability to sniff out opportunities. When there's trouble, she can often be found on the scene before the Peace Force, proffering her card to the likeliest-looking aggrieved party. She prefers burger to longtime residents, as it's easier to string them along with false promises of success with the system.

Pecanis is no specialist—she'll take both civil suits for plaintiffs and criminal cases for defendants. Her rates fluctuate based on the perceived ability of the client to pay. Usually she starts out offering quite modest rates and then begins jacking up the price—for

“unanticipated extra work and expenses”—when the client is in trouble. When clients balk she makes a big show of keeping them on because she believes passionately in the justice of their case, even though the financial rewards aren’t commensurate with the time involved. In civil cases, she offers to work on a for a strict percentage of the judgement only when she’s certain of the cases’ merits—which is rarely.

The success of any lawyer in Her Exaltedness’ system is not based on a knowledge of the law, but on the ability to broker deals. Pecanis is not liked by the magistrates she deals with, but makes this work in her favor. She has carefully studied each of them and tailors her demeanor for maximum irritation of whichever judge she’s dealing with. In order to expedite her exit from their chambers, they often end up agreeing to deals they wouldn’t accept from other lawyers. She’s perfected this technique on many of her fellow lawyers as well, allowing her to settle many claims before they even reach the magistrates. Most of her cases, criminal or civil, are settled before trial, often in her favor. Once she hits the courtroom, it’s a different story—her irritating manner loses sympathy for her clients. Al Amarjans wise to her reputation hire her first but dump her if it looks like the case can’t be settled out of court.

Part of the creepiness she trades on comes from the suspicion that she might well be going insane. Pecanis comes off as slightly cracked, with a high-pitched, grating voice and a bizarre sense of humor. She laughs at the misfortunes and weaknesses of others, and often dreams aloud of retiring to a vacation paradise where she will be tended by well-oiled native slave boys. If there

was ever anything likeable about her, she carefully stamped it out years ago.

Mexican woman, age 54, 161 cm, 66 kg, rumpled linen men’s suits, Panama hat, nicotine-stained fingers, shockingly large bulbous nose with veins pulsing on the surface.

Languages: Spanish, English, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Grating, 4 dice: Able to instinctively tell what words or behavior would most irritate those she deals with. Doggedly persistent. People give her what they want in order to get rid of her. No one wants to look at her horrible proboscis for too long, either. (Grating voice, awful nose.)

Legal Contacts, 3 dice: She knows the top peace officers, lawyers and magistrates in town very well; this includes both their foibles and the skeletons in their closets. Can not only use this information to her own advantage but sell it to others if need be. (Hands out business cards that read “Beatriz Pecanis, Legal Services.”)

Al Amarjan Law, 2 dice: Since the actual text of the island’s legal codes mean less than manipulation of the individuals in the system, Beatriz hasn’t bothered to commit more than the basics to memory. (Uses legal jargon.)



Pain, penalty die: After smoking, eating rich foods, or exerting herself, Pecanis’ nose swells up and flares with pain, costing her a penalty die on all tasks requiring concentration. (Nose reddens at times.)

Story Ideas

1. PCs are arrested by a Peace Force officer. (Knowing some PCs, it might even be a valid charge.) Pecanis approaches them and offers to take on their case. She explains the bidding process typical of most criminal cases and needs to know how much money the PCs can spend to bail themselves out of trouble. Pecanis bids well for them, but pockets the difference between her bid and the total amount they had to spend. Use this either as a consequence of getting caught doing something very foolish, or if you need to make the PCs poor for some reason.

2. The PCs are having problems with a troublesome enemy, whether it be Avan Bloodlord or Pere Brinker. Pecanis gets wind of this and offers to sue the involved party in civil court. Knowing that most magistrates know less of the law than she, she just makes up outrageous charges like Association with Intent to Fibrillate and Breach of Inferred Verbal Promise. The victim of the frivolous suits counter sues for Property Value Reduction and Alienation of Fear and Respect. None of these suits ever go anywhere, but as court dates come up, the antagonists get an opportunity to interact face to face on neutral territory in the presence of armed guards every couple of months. However, if something bad happens to the enemy, the PCs, with their litigation on the books, become the prime suspects. At this point, Pecanis cheerfully offers to represent them in criminal court.

Asat Airapetjan

Beleaguered Magistrate

Robin D. Laws

Asat Airapetjan just wants to be left alone. His idea of paradise is a nice quiet room, a few degrees below room temperature, where he can get in bed, pull the covers over his head, and just clear his mind of all thought and turmoil for hours on end. He hates fuss and struggle, loves peace and quiet. Maybe he shouldn't have become a magistrate in the notorious "Petty Matters" bureau of the Al Amarjan Bureau of Universal Justice. The job consists entirely of attempting to maintain composure in the face of constant bickering and wrangling. But Airapetjan had little choice in the matter.

Twelve years ago he stood before the court, falsely accused of a bizarre charge called Conspiracy to Commit Seditious Vandalism. His pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears. The magistrate pronounced him guilty before hearing the arguments for the defense, and gave him three choices. He could accept a two year recess during which he would be confined to the Detention Center. Or a severe beating administered by Peace Force officers, followed by deportation. Or Airapetjan could agree to take the magistrate's place. He did so, was immediately handed the man's judicial robes, and was instructed by the bailiff to start the next case.

Over the years Airapetjan has determined that other magistrates were "called to the bench" in the same manner. He has contemplated handing the position off many times - but sometimes magistrates are rearrested on the original charges when they do so. Sometimes they are not. It all seems to depend on

the whims of the higher-ups, who might be influential senators, or Her Exaltedness herself.

Airapetjan is still afraid to risk abandoning his post.

He has never been trained in Al Amarjan law. The "Petty Matters" court actually handles most criminal cases from jaywalking to murder, and takes on civil cases as well. Now and then an order comes down from the Bureau of Universal Justice specifying a case is to be surrendered to the Higher Court - which means the personal adjudication of Her Exaltedness. Also, any magistrate's decisions are subject to review by Monique D'Aubainne. Airapetjan hates to be overturned by Her Exaltedness, because he doesn't want her to notice his existence. Therefore, in criminal matters, he decides sentences based on perceived government interest in the case. Wealthy or influential clients are let off with mild censure; the poor take the full force of the law. If high-ranking Peace Force officers show up in court, he's more punitive than if the testifying officer is a mere street soldier.

Al Amarjan magistrates are allowed to take bribes so long as they pass fifty-seven percent along to the government as its share. (The magistrate's portion is also considered taxable income.) Like most judges, Airapetjan, all things being equal, decides on behalf of the highest bidder. For propriety's sake, these negotiations take place in chambers. In criminal cases, the victim's lawyer usually ends up bidding against the defendant's, with the government prosecutor present to make sure the magistrate declares the correct amount of the bribe.

Armenian man, age 35, 168 cm, 75 kg, balding, sorrowful eyes with dark rings under them, jowly features.

Languages: Armenian, English.

Traits

Wealthy, 4 dice: As a bribe recipient for twelve years, Airapetjan has more money than he knows what to do with. He's a man of simple desires, and the only things you can do with money involve noise and stress. He has a nice soundproofed home with the latest in high-tech antiburglary equipment and even a powerful psychovore to guard his villa from astral attacks. But he has nothing of value inside the house to protect. (Expensive suits.)

Aerial Photographer, 3 dice: This was his trade before his ill-fated trip to Al Amarja. He worked for the Soviet government and was sent here on an exchange mission. Curiously enough, the Al Amarjan photographer sent to Armenia never returned, either... (Is lenient with anyone who can chat knowledgeably about cameras.)

Politics, 3 dice: Though not a participant in Al Amarjan politics—that would be his idea of Hell—he does keep his ear to the ground so he can make the right judgements in court. If somehow drawn out, he could explain the intricacies of the island's influence structure in precise detail. (Fearful expression.)

Hates his job: Airapetjan is profoundly unhappy. He thinks he's living something worse than a Kafka novel—at least Joseph K only had to sit through one trial.

Story Ideas

1. If the PCs are hauled into court and irritate Airapetjan, one of them is in big trouble. His fingers on the pulse of events in the Presidential Palace, he has determined that now is the time to retire without being noticed. The PC with the biggest mouth is given the same offer Airapetjan's predecessor gave him twelve years ago. If the PC takes the

judgeship, the government expects her to serve at least a four year term, and arrests her if she attempts to skip out before then. Holding down a judgeship requires long hours and concentration, making outside activities almost impossible.

2. The PCs are hired by a lawyer representing a secretive client to make a raid on the Mt. Ralsius villa of a prominent judge and steal the Picasso sculpture he keeps in his living room. There is no sculpture, or much of anything, in Airapetjan's house. He's just testing his defenses, which include some fiendish traps. Those who survive the penetration attempt will be paid in full. Airapetjan is not in during the attack on his villa.

The Pen

Dirty Deed

Richard G. Bark

This is one of many minor encounters on the Edge designed to shake the players up. This is not to say that individual dirty deeds can not be developed into something bigger or more involved. They are intentionally vague in order to allow individual GMs to fit them into their plans.

The Pen

This dirty deed begins innocently enough, shortly after the PCs' arrival on Al Amarja. While in the Terminal filling out the assorted forms necessary for entering the Edge, first time Burger are told that they may keep the pen that was handed out with the stack of forms as a complimentary souvenir of their stay in Al Amarja. For each burger, make a Hand of Fate roll and note the unfortunate individual who scored lowest. Later in the series, at a time that best fits your schemes—or if the action has

slowed down and you want to spice it up—spring the following on your players.

The character who rolled the lowest HoF is abducted. Ideally this is done with minimum carnage, but at a time when the others are nearby. For the others in the group, the missing character will appear to have vanished without a trace. The abductee is taken without a chance to retaliate—the abductors choose their moment well. He is bound, hooded, tossed in the back of a car and driven through the Edge.

The ride lasts for about twenty minutes. Eventually he finds himself bound to a chair in a seemingly abandoned factory. Everything is dark except for the bright light beating down from above his seated position. He can make out shadowy figures in the darkness beyond the light.

Suddenly, one of the figures begins asking questions. The interrogator begins with, "Where is the pen, Frank?" Pause for an answer. "What have you done with the pen, Frank?" Another pause. "You didn't lose it, did you?" Pause. "Why weren't you at the rendezvous?" Pause. "You didn't intend to make a profit by selling to another group, did you Frank?" Pause. "The pen is safe, isn't it Frank?" Note: If the character's name happens to be Frank, change the name at the end of the questions or if the abductee is a woman, change the name to something appropriate.

At this point, the character should be confused and wondering what the hell is going on. He is likely to ask questions of his own. These questions will fall on deaf ears. The interrogator will continue with his own line of questioning, and his questions all concern the pen. Eventually, the interrogator will tell the character, "You have one day to turn the pen over as planned. You will be

contacted and a new drop point will be established." This is the outcome no matter how the character answers. The character will then be re-hooded, knocked out and dumped somewhere near the location where he was taken.

It shouldn't be too hard for the character to realize that "the pen" is the one given to him at the Terminal. If it is hopeless, give him a couple of memory rolls. If he realizes this during the interrogation, he will not have it on his person. Unless the character specified before hand what he did with the pen, make a HoF roll to determine how quickly he can locate it. A low roll means 4d6 hours search; medium roll means 1d6 hours and high roll means he can find it right away. Feel free to make the search as interesting and/or difficult as you like.

If the character makes the attempt to remember his interrogator, the one outstanding feature that he remembers is a peculiar odor. Examples are decaying leaves, orchids, a particular perfume, etc. This smell can be used to torment him later. If the player dismantles the pen, he will find nothing out of the ordinary; it is a typical ball point with "Enjoy your stay on Al Amarja" printed on the side. Even if it is examined by a scientist, there is nothing unusual about the pen. This, of course, can be altered to suit your tastes and purposes. Sometime in the 24 hours after he is dropped off, the character is contacted and told to wait someplace. The method of contact can be by phone, telegram, Little Scratches, or anything else you can think of. The location of the drop point is also left to your discretion, but it should be somewhat crowded.

As the character waits, his nose picks up a familiar scent; if he didn't know the significance before, it clicks now. The

interrogator is nearby. He will also notice that the pen is gone, even if it was in his hand. Looking around will not pick out any unusual individuals, although certain fringe abilities might. The possibilities here are too great to anticipate, so use your best judgement to determine the outcome. It is preferable that the interrogator get away clean, but if this isn't possible, use a generic cloak GMC with moderate fighting ability. The interrogator has back up and they will attempt to extract their accomplice, and as the PC is likely to have back up as well, this could turn out to be a big fight.

After the pen is picked up (providing it is picked up) the character will receive a notice informing him that there is \$1,500 waiting for him at Swaps, no questions asked. If the PC does not show up at the drop point for the meeting, things are only slightly different. No matter where it is, the pen is still retrieved by the interrogator and the character will get a whiff of the interrogator's odor. However, the character will not get the \$1,500 payment. As you can see, there is no real point to this aside from disrupting a certain player's routine for a day or two.

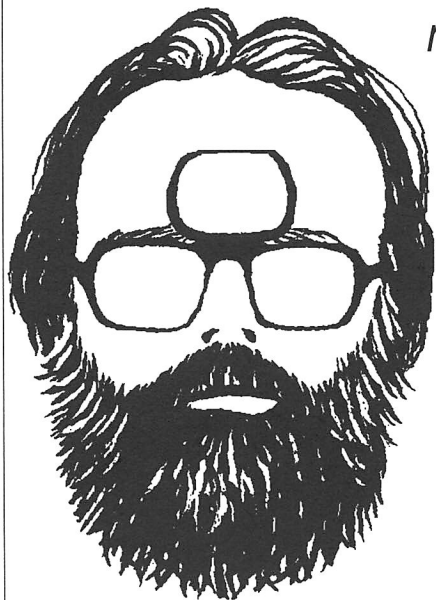
Afterwards, however, he will probably look over his shoulder a little more. And when you're feeling a little sadistic, have the PC run into the smell again every once in a while. If this little scenario fits into other plans, alter it to fit. Some possible perpetrators are; one of the Mover Cells, a Pharaoh, a branch of the Net or the Kergillians. Unlikely perpetrators are the Throckmorton operatives and the Mr. Le Thuys.



Edge watcher

Lisa Padol takes another hack at material available for Over the Edge. This time around, her keen

reviewer's pen stabs at Friend or Foe?...



Friend or Foe

64 pages, perfect bound
\$10.95

This is a book of almost three dozen GMCs for Over the Edge. Following the descriptions of each of the GMCs are story ideas suggesting ways to work the characters into a campaign. Most, though not all, of the GMCs are accompanied by a small black and white illustration of the character. Black and white artwork is underappreciated. These illustrations are great, giving as good a picture of the GMCs as gaudy color illustrations would, and taking up a minimum of space. The layout is good as well, with large type that will not make your eyes water. It doesn't smudge either. (That should go without saying, but I've found that it doesn't.)

Friend or Foe is supplemented with descriptions of facets of Al Amarjan life and new establishments. As an added bonus, there's a section describing where on Al Amarja the GMCs can be found.

All of this is very useful, but of course, the primary goal of *Friend or Foe* is to provide GMCs. The GMCs are wonderful. In most cases, as soon as I read the description of a GMC, he or she immediately came to life, and

ideas for using him or her in my OTE game started popping into my head. I've never read such a lively bunch of descriptions.

For those interested in such things, here are some statistics: 23 GMCs are male; 12 are female. One of the women used to be male. Three of the males might be more properly considered "other," but the ratio remains 2:1. 9 GMCs are from the USA; 5 are Al Amarjan. 2 can't really be said to belong to any country. The remainder come from a wide variety of countries. I was surprised that such a high percentage of the GMCs are from the USA, but that's not a flaw.

In fact, the only quibble I have with *Friend or Foe* is the price. I know the price is as low as Atlas can afford to make it. Certainly, there's plenty of good material in *Friend or Foe*. But the fact remains that I own a copy because John Nephew was kind enough to send me one in return for my articles in *EdgeWork*. I would not have spent \$10.95 on it, and I'm not comfortable telling others to pay more than I would.

If money isn't an issue, grab *Friend or Foe* at once. If it is, I cannot in good faith tell say that you should buy it. However, I can say that you will enjoy it.

Grade: A- (and it's that low only because I'm a born penny pincher!)



EdgeWork

THE FANZINE DEVOTED TO OVER THE

EdgeWork is a quarterly fanzine produced by independent editor Peter Hentges, and is distributed by Atlas Games.

The definitive fanzine for *Over the Edge*™ returns in its third issue. The pages of this issue are filled with more OTE material than you'll find in the pages of eight other gaming magazines combined! No irrelevant advertising to dull your palate and bring on unpleasant gas.

Beginning with this issue, *EdgeWork* expands to cover the latest offspring from Atlas Games, the collectible card game *On the Edge*™. One of the best-designed new games in this market, *On the Edge*™ also offers a spectacular resource for OTE players. Read the introductory article in this issue and look for more information in future issues. All under the nefarious control of Peter Hentges.

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